



The **Moffett** Group

October 14, 2011

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — *Extensions of Remarks*

E1875

COMMEMORATING THE FIRST AN-
NIVERSARY OF THE KENYAN
CONSTITUTION

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 14, 2011

Ms. LEE of California. Mr. Speaker, last August we witnessed a flowering of freedom in Eastern Africa. On August 5, 2010, Kenya endorsed a brand new constitution, which guaranteed all Kenyan citizens the rights to security, housing, food, life, freedom from discrimination and the freedom of expression, among others. I rise today to recognize the recent anniversary of this constitution's adoption, and to congratulate the Republic of Kenya on this remarkable step forward.

Despite being home to the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize—Wangari Maathi, who sadly passed away last month—Kenya had long treated women as second-class citizens. In the past, female candidates for office have had to carry knives and wear extra garments to fend off the possibility of politically-motivated rape.

But the new constitution has dramatically altered the status of women in Kenya. Among the over 40 new reforms is a non-discrimination clause outlawing bias on the basis of sex, pregnancy or marital status. Additionally, women can own and inherit land, and matrimonial property is protected during and after the termination of marriage. Unconstitutional customary laws carried on by tradition are now void.

Women's right have been elevated in the new Kenyan Constitution. But as anyone who lives in a democracy knows, constitutional mechanisms must be matched by meaningful enforcement and constant vigilance to actually achieve their goals.

Kenya is facing many trials at the moment. The drought in the Horn of Africa is threatening the lives of over 13 million people. Food insecurity is affecting 3.75 million people in Kenya, and 4.3 million men, women, and children are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance.

These numbers do not include the influx of refugees from Somalia and neighboring lands. At its peak, Kenya and Ethiopia saw nearly 1,000 people a day arrive at refugee camps to escape the famine in Somalia. Sexual violence against women in these already overcrowded refugee camps is on the rise.

There are no easy solutions to this crisis, and we in the United States must step up and do our part to help our fellow people in need. Nonetheless, in face of these adversities, it is heartening to see Kenya's men and women move forward together, as equals and as partners. By empowering Kenyan women and rejecting gender-based discrimination, the new Kenyan constitution has paved the way for a brighter future for the Kenyan people.

The Moffett Group Group Provides representation to the Government of Kenya. More information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.

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